

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TH, US
SUBJ: CHARGE CONVERSATION WITH INTERIOR MINISTER SAMAK ON
HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: BANGKOK 18317

1. DURING THE COURSE OF CHARGE'S AUGUST 18 CALL ON INTERIOR
MINISTER SAMAK SUNTHORAWET (REFTEL), THE SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS
CAME UP. SAMAK TOLD THE CHARGE THAT HE THOUGHT HE (THE CHARGE)
WOULD FIND BANGKOK A SAFER PLACE TO LIVE THAN IT WAS FROM 1973-76,
SINCE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WAS CRACKING DOWN SEVERELY ON
CRIMINALS AND "UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS". THE CHARGE USED THIS
OPPORTUNITY TO MENTION THE USG'S COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS,
AND REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER'S
AUGUST 9 SPEECH ON THE SUBJECT. SAMAK SAID THAT HE HAD READ THE
SPEECH AND THAT THE RTG, TOO, BELIEVED IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND
SUPPORTED PRESIDENT CARTER'S POLICIES IN THIS AREA. HE ASKED,
HOWEVER, FOR US UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS
NOW FACING THAILAND, PROBLEMS WHICH MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE RTG
PRESENTLY TO ALLOW LIBERTIES COMPARABLE TO THOSE ENJOYED IN THE
US. CHARGE NOTED THAT, AS DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER HAD
SAID TO THE PRIME MINISTER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ESTABLISH A
TREND AND DIRECTION TO GOVERNMENT ACTIONS LEADING TOWARD GREATER
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POLITICAL RIGHTS.

2. THE MINISTER SAID SOME SEVENTY STUDENTS ARE PRESENTLY AWAITING
TRIAL IN CONNECTION WITH THE OCTOBER 6 INCIDENT AT THAMMASART
UNIVERSITY, AND THAT THEIR CASES WILL BE HANDLED BY THE COURTS
IN THE NORMAL FASHION. THE CHARGE SAID THAT WE WERE PLEASED
THAT THESE CASES WOULD RECEIVE DUE PROCESS IN OPEN COURT. HE

ALSO SAID THAT IT WAS IMPRTANT THAT THERE BE A GENERAL PERCEPTION
THAT THE TRIALS ARE CONDUCTED WITH A CLEAR REGARD TO DUE PROCESS.

3. COMMENT: SAMAK COMMENTS WERE FAIRLY STANDARD FARE FOR HIM;
HOWEVER, THEY DID AFFORD OPPORTUNITY FOR CHARGE IN LOW KEY TO
MAKE A FEW USEFUL POINTS WITH REGARD TO OUR HUMAN RIGHTS
POLICY. SAMAK ACCEPTED COMMENTS AMICABLY AND WITHOUT CONTENTION.
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